Dr. *Chauncy's*

SERMON

On the Death of

Mrs. *Foxcroft.*

76

BRITISH MUSEUM

The BLESSEDNESS *of the* DEAD *who die in the LORD.*

A

SERMON

Preached the LORD's Day after the Funeral of

Mrs. ANNA FOXCROFT,

The amiable and pious Conſort of the Reverend

Mr. *Thomas Foxcroft*,

Who died *October* 9th 1749, in the 53d Year of her Age.

By *Charles Chauncy*, D. D.
One of the Paſtors of the Firſt Church in BOSTON.

Philip. i. 21. *For me to live is CHRIST, and to die is Gain.*

BOSTON,

Printed by ROGERS and FOWLE in Queen-Street.
MDCCXLIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

The Bleſſedneſs of the Dead who die in LORD.

REV. XIV. 13.

AND I heard a Voice from Heaven, ſaying to me, write, Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the LORD from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the SPIRIT, that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.

THE *Manner* in which theſe Words are introduced beſpeaks a more than ordinary Attention. *I heard a Voice from Heaven.* i. e. from GOD out of Heaven: And it was a Voice diſtinctly articulated in its Sound, like the Voice at our SAVIOUR's *Baptiſm* and *Transfiguration*; a Voice that ſpake to the Apoſtle *John* in plain and intelligible Words, commanding him, not meerly to pronounce, but to *write*, the Dead in CHRIST bleſſed. For ſo it follows, *Saying unto me, Write, Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the LORD from henceforth.* Like Words of Support and Conſolation to the Saints of the moſt High, both *living* and *dying*, are ſcarce to be met with any where in the Bible. The *Dead in* CHRIST, it is true, are frequently ſpoken of as *bleſſed*;

bleſſed; but, perhaps, never with ſo much Particularity, with ſuch ſpecial Marks of Honour and Diſtinction. And yet, this is not all: For the *Divine* SPIRIT is himſelf introduced, expreſly and ſolemnly teſtifying that they are thus bleſſed, and particularly ſpecifying the *Inſtances* wherein they are ſo; *Yea, ſaith the SPIRIT, that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.*

In the Words, the three following Things are obſervable, not improper to employ our preſent Meditations.

I. *A Deſcription of the Perſons* here pronounced bleſſed; *the Dead who die in the LORD.*

II. *A ſpecial Notification of the Time when they enter upon this Bleſſedneſs*; ſignified in thoſe Words, *from henceforth.*

III. *A Recital of the particular Inſtances* wherein they are bleſſed; *that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.*

Accordingly, theſe are the Heads we ſhall diſtinctly illuſtrate, and then *apply* what may be offered in ſome ſutable Reflections.

I. The *firſt* Thing obſervable in the Text is, *A Deſcription of the Perſons pronounced bleſſed.* And theſe are the *Dead*: Not the Dead without Diſcrimination, but *the Dead who die in the LORD.*

But, you will aſk, Who are theſe? Who are the Perſons meant by *the Dead who die in the LORD*, concerning whom it is here declared, that they are *bleſſed.* In anſwer whereto,

Some ſay, that the holy *Martyrs*, thoſe who have ſuffered Death for the *Name* and *Sake* of the LORD JESUS

JESUS CHRIST, are the Perſons more eſpecially intended. *Who die in the LORD*, i. e. for the LORD, for his Sake, in Defence of his Cauſe, and to bear Teſtimony to the Truth of his Goſpel. So ſome expound the Phraſe: In which Senſe, it muſt be owned, it is ſometimes taken in Scripture; as in *Eph.* iv. 1. 1 *Pet.* i. 14. (according to the Original) and in ſeveral other Places; which it is needleſs to turn you to. And, to be ſure, thoſe who ſuffer for Righteouſneſs Sake, who die in the Cauſe of CHRIST, 'not counting their Lives dear to them', ſo that they may honour their Saviour, and the Truths pertaining to his Kingdom, are not to be excluded a Share in the *Bleſſedneſs* the Text ſpeaks of: Though there does not appear ſufficient Reaſon to determine, that theſe are the only Perſons here intended.

Others therefore interpret the Words more generally, as including not only *Confeſſors* and *Martyrs*, but *all good Chriſtians*. *Who die in the LORD*, i. e. in the Faith of the LORD JESUS, united to him, and intereſted in the Mercy of GOD through him. In this Senſe they underſtand the Phraſe: And with good Reaſon; for it ſeems to be of the ſame Import with thoſe Phraſes, *the Dead in CHRIST*, thoſe that are *fallen aſleep in JESUS*, which are undoubtedly made uſe of as deſcriptive of *ſincere Chriſtians* in common.

And we ſhall the more eaſily conceive of the Propriety of this Mode of Speech to point out *good Men*, if we call to mind, that *they* are not infrequently, in the Writings of the New-Teſtament, characteriſed from their *being in CHRIST*. Agreeable whereto is that Language, 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. 'If any Man be *in* CHRIST, he is a new Creature'. And again, *Chap.* xii. Ver. 2. 'I knew a Man *in* CHRIST'.

And

And yet again, *Philip.* iii. 8, 9. — 'I count all Things but Loſs, — that I may win CHRIST, and be found *in him.*'

There is indeed a *being in CHRIST* that is common to all that are Members of that viſible Kingdom, of which he is Head and Lord, whether they are Chriſtians in *Truth*, or in *Pretence* only. Hence the Apoſtle *Paul*, when mentioning the Churches of *Judea* (in which there were doubtleſs a Number of meer *nominal* Chriſtians) uſes that Style 'which were *in* CHRIST'‖. And our bleſſed Saviour expreſly ſpeaks of 'Branches *in him* which bear no Fruit'†. And makes that Suppoſition, * 'If a Man abide not *in me*, he is caſt forth as a Branch, and is withered: And Men gather them, and caſt them into the Fire; and they are burned'.

But this notwithſtanding, there is a *being in CHRIST* that is *peculiar to good Men*, and certainly deſcriptive of their Character as ſuch. And this indeed is that *being in CHRIST*, or *Union to him*, that is ſo much celebrated in Scripture, and ſet forth under ſuch a Variety of ſtrong and lively Reſemblances. It is compared to the Union between *Huſband* and *Wife*, which is ſo near and intimate that they are no longer *twain*, but *one Fleſh* ‡. — It is compared to the Union of a *Building*, in which the ſeveral Parts, being fitly framed, are ſo joined together as to conſtitute *one Houſe*; of which Houſe, CHRIST, in the Similitude, is the *Foundation*, or chief *Corner-Stone* **. — It is compared to the Union of the *Body* with the *Head*, in Conſequence whereof it 'maketh Increaſe, and groweth up *into him*, in all Things, which is the Head, even

‖ Gal. i. 22. † John xv. 2. * Ibid. Ver. 6. ‡ Matth. xix. 5. ** 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6.

CHRIST'.

CHRIST' *‖.— It is compared to the Union of a *Vine* and its *Branches*; and the Analogy is ſo exact, that 'as the Branch cannot bear Fruit of it ſelf, except it abide in the Vine; ſo neither can *they*, except they abide *in him*' †. — It is compared to the Union between GOD and CHRIST; and *they*, in the Compariſon, are ſaid to be *in him*, and *he in them*, in ſome Senſe analogous to that in which *he* is *in the Father*, and the *Father in him* ‖. — In a Word, *They* are, according to the Scriptures, *united to him*, and *ſo in him*, as to be *transformed into the ſame Image*, and to *partake of the ſame ſpiritual Nature* ‡. — They are *ſo in him* as to derive from him thoſe Supplies of Grace, whereby they are made 'compleat *in him*, who is the Head of all Principality and Power' ‖‖. — Yea, they are *ſo in him* as to become intereſted in what he has done, and ſuffered, and is now doing in Heaven, at the Right Hand of GOD, on the Behalf of Sinners **.

And wherein could good Chriſtians be better diſtinguiſhed? Their being thus ſpoken of as *in* CHRIST is an infallible Mark, diſcriminating them from all others.

And theſe now are the Perſons intended by the *Dead that die in the LORD.* They are thoſe, and only thoſe, who, while alive, were *ſo united to* CHRIST as that they 'abode in him, and his Words in them'? They are thoſe who were ſo *in* CHRIST, as that they derived ſuch Influences from him whereby they were enabled to bring forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, in a Converſation becoming the Goſpel of CHRIST. Of all ſuch, and of ſuch only, it may be ſaid, while they live, that they live *in* CHRIST;

*‖ Eph. iv. 15, 16. † Joh. xv. 4, 5. ‖ Joh. xvii. 21, 22, 23. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‖‖ Col. ii. 10. ** Eph. i. 3.

and when they die, that they die *in* CHRIST. And *bleſſed*, ſays the *Voice from Heaven*, in my Text, *are the Dead that* thus *die in the LORD.* And this leads

II. To the *ſecond* Thing obſervable in the Words, which is, *A ſpecial Notification of the Time, when the Dead in CHRIST ſhall enter upon this Bleſſedneſs*; ſignified by that Phraſe, *from henceforth.* In the Original, it is *aparti*; which is an Expreſſion that will admit of ſeveral Senſes. Among others, it may well be conſtrued in this, † which ſpecifies the Time when the Dead in CHRIST commence bleſſed. 'Bleſſed are the Dead, that die in the LORD, *from henceforth*'. As if it had been ſaid, '*from that Time* they are bleſſed. They are no ſooner Dead than they are bleſſed. They enter upon a State of Bleſſedneſs inſtantly upon their Death'. The Words are certainly capable of being thus underſtood; and this, probably is the very Senſe in which they ought to be interpreted: To be ſure, it is a Senſe that falls in with the *Truth of Fact*, in reſpect of all the *Dead that die in the LORD.*

Their *Bodies*, it is true, 'return to the Duſt from whence they were taken'; but not ſo their *Spirits.* Theſe 'aſcend up to GOD who gave them': And this *immediately* upon their Death. *From henceforth*, we may ſay, they are bleſſed.

Their *Spirits* do not go to a *Place of Purgation*, in order to their being fitted for the *paradiſaick* State; as is the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*: Neither do they *ſleep* with their Bodies, till the general Reſurrection; as is the Opinion of others, who, tho' they profeſs a Regard to the Scriptures, yet

† Vid. *Lowman's* Paraphraſe in Loc. Note e.

explain

explain them ſo as to conſiſt with their own private Notions: Much leſs ſtill do they *periſh* at Death, ſinking into a State of *Non exiſtence*; as is the Pretence of thoſe, who are ſtyled, in the ſacred Language, 'wiſe Men after the Fleſh'.

If we may give Credit to the Revelations of *Scripture*, there is no Room for Doubt, whether the *Soul* ſurvives the Funeral of the *Body*: Nor can it reaſonably remain a Queſtion, Whether thoſe, *who die in the LORD*, do immediately paſs into Glory? The Apoſtle *Paul* certainly thought, that good Men were happy *inſtantly* upon their Death. For with him, in reſpect of all ſincere Chriſtians, 'to die is Gain'; 'to be abſent from the Body, is to be preſent with the LORD'; and 'to depart hence, is to be with CHRIST, which is by far better than to abide in the Fleſh'. And our bleſſed SAVIOUR himſelf, in the *Parable* of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, repreſents *Lazarus*, upon his dying, as *immediately* 'carried by the Angels into *Abraham*'s *Boſom*'; by which he means a Place of ineffable Happineſs. And it is obſervable, what he here ſays of *Lazarus* is exhibited as an *Example* of what will be the Caſe of all *who die in* CHRIST: The holy Angels of GOD will take into Cuſtody their departing Spirits, and convoy them ſafe to ſome Place of Bleſſedneſs, in the future World.

And this *Scripture-Repreſentation* of the Matter is far more agreeable to *true Philoſophy*, than that which makes Death, either a *total Deſtruction* of our Being, or the bringing us into a State of *Inſenſibility*.

Death, conſidered as the *Deſtruction* of our rational and moral Powers, is an incredible Thing, if viewed in the Light of *Reaſon*. We have in Nature no Example of ſuch Deſtruction. What we call

call the *Deſtruction of material Beings* is, properly ſpeaking, nothing more than a *Change of their Form.* And if, in reſpect of *unperceiving* Beings, there is no Deſtruction; but only a *Change* in the *Mode* of their Exiſtence: Why ſhould it be thought, that a *total End* is put to *perceiving* Beings, much leſs to *intelligent moral* ones, upon ſuch an Appearance as Death? This cannot be argued from *Analogy*: For there is nothing ſimilar to it, that we know of, in all the Revolutions of Nature. — It certainly looks more rational to conclude, that, in reſpect of ſuch thinking moral Beings as Men are, a *Change* only is introduced by Death, as to the *Manner* of their Communication with this ſenſible and material World.— Beſides, it does not reflect Honour on the infinitely benevolent Creator and Ruler of the World, to ſuppoſe him putting a Period, at Death, to theExiſtence of rational moral Beings; eſpecially, thoſe among them, who, by a wiſe Improvement of their Powers, have enlarged their Capacities for Happineſs. We can eaſily conceive GOD to be good, and as exerciſing Goodneſs, and the greateſt Goodneſs upon the whole, when the Conſtitution of Things is ſuch, as that, according to certain ſtated Laws, there ſhall be a *Change* in moral Beings, as to the *Manner* of their Exiſtence, and the Exertment of their ſeveral Powers: But the Conſiſtency between Goodneſs, in an infinitely benevolent Creator and Governour, and the *total periſhing* of moral Beings; eſpecially ſuch as have behaved well, does not ſo readily appear to the humane Mind. To be ſure, it gives us, at beſt, but a low diminiſhed Idea of the Benevolence of GOD, to view him as *deſtroying moral Agents*, capable of Happineſs, and growing in their Capacity and Meetneſs for it, after ſo ſhort and momentany an Exiſtence as our's muſt be, if there is an End of it at Death. ——

In

In like Manner, Death, conſidered as ſinking Men into a *Stupor*, and thereby rendring their thinking Powers uſeleſs and inactive, though it be only till the *Reſurrection*, is a Notion that can no more be juſtified by *Reaſon*. What may have led to this Apprehenſion, and is indeed the only Thing that can, with any Colour, give Credit to it, is the ceaſing of that *ſtated Order*, at Death, according to which the humane Mind has Communication, by Means of a wiſely *organiſed Body*, with external Objects. But this is a Conſideration more plauſible than weighty, unleſs it could be made to appear, that the *Mind*, upon Failure of that *bodily Organization*, by Means of which it is *now* affected and moved, muſt be, if not deſtroyed, yet, at leaſt, reduced to an *inactive* State; becoming incapable of receiving other Ideas, or exerciſing it ſelf in Contemplation on thoſe it has already received: Which perhaps can never be done. It is allowed by all Inquirers into Nature, that the *preſent Method*, according to which the Mind receives Ideas, is an *arbitrary* Conſtitution: To be ſure, it is not the only poſſible one; for if it was, then no *Mind*, or *thinking Being*, could be impreſſed with Ideas, but in Conformity to this Law of Nature: Which, without all Doubt, is contrary to the Truth of Fact. And if the Mind *may* receive Ideas, and exert it ſelf in making the proper Uſe of them, without being confined to the *preſent eſtabliſhed Order of Nature*, it can never be proved, that, when this ceaſes to take place, as it will at *Death*, the Mind becomes *ſtupid*, *ſenſeleſs* and *inactive*. It ſhould ſeem far more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that *Death* only puts an End to that *conſtituted Method*, according to which the *Mind*, at preſent, receives Senſations from this material World; introducing ſome *unknown Change* as to the *Manner* of its Communication with *that* it then goes into.

And

And thus the Exiſtence of the *Soul*, after *Death*, as a *living*, *active*, *thinking* Being, is a Suppoſition perfectly agreeable to the Principles of *Reaſon*, as well as the Doctrine of *Revelation*.

As to the *Place* where unimbodied Spirits exiſt, *Reaſon*, it muſt be owned, is wholly at a Loſs; and *Revelation* ſpeaks only in general Terms. *Reaſon* alſo is unable to declare the *Condition* of humane Souls in their *ſeparate* State :— But we are relieved, under this Difficulty, by *Revelation*; which expreſly affirms, in reſpect of all *who die in the LORD*, that they are *bleſſed*. The Apoſtle *John*, in my Text, *heard a Voice from Heaven*, declaring them *bleſſed*, and bidding him *write them bleſſed from henceforth*, i. e. from the very Moment of their Death. Yea, they are ſolemnly pronounced bleſſed by the SPIRIT of Truth; who alſo particularly ſays wherein they are ſo. And this brings me

III. To the *third* Thing obſervable in the Text, viz. *A Recital of the particular Inſtances, wherein the Dead who die in the LORD are bleſſed.* And theſe are two. 1. *They reſt from their Labours.* 2. *Their Works do follow them.*

1. *They reſt from their Labours.* i. e. from the Sorrows and Afflictions, the Croſſes, Difficulties and Vexations, they were expoſed to, and might be called to conflict with, while in this Vale of Tears.

Even good Chriſtians, thoſe who are *in* CHRIST, as being ſpiritually *united* to him, are liable, while in this World of Tryal and Diſcipline, to all thoſe various Troubles to which Mankind are born, and which as naturally come upon them, 'as the Sparks fly upwards'. There is, in this Reſpect, 'one Event both to the Righteous and the Wicked: All Things

Things come alike to all: And no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before him'.

There are, in general, two Sorts of Troubles, which thoſe, who are *in* CHRIST, are expoſed to, and often conflict with, in the preſent World, which they ſhall be ſet at Reſt from the Moment they die, on Account whereof they are bleſſed; the one *common to all Men*, the other *peculiar to good Chriſtians*.

In *common with other Men*, they are expoſed to numberleſs Diſeaſes and Diſaſters, and all the Pain and Sorrow naturally conſequent thereupon.—They may meet with Loſſes, and Croſſes, and Diſappointments; and are capable of very uneaſy Senſations herefrom.— They may ſuffer Hunger and Thirſt, Nakedneſs and Diſtreſs; and even the Want of all outward good Things.— They may be defamed, oppreſſed, and injuriouſly treated, both by Enemies and Friends.— They may be called to put on Mourning for the Death of their neareſt Friends and Relations: 'The Deſire of their Eyes may be taken from them with a Stroke;' their 'Children may be removed into Darkneſs:' or, in many other Ways, their deareſt Comforts may be imbittered to them.— In a Word, there is no Evil that can befall other Men, but it may befall them alſo; and ſo as to impreſs their Minds with Grief and Pain, and endanger their indulging to Impatience and Diſcontent. But this is their *Bleſſedneſs*, that they ſhall not always labour under the Trial of ſuch Evils as theſe. For at Death they *reſt from their Labours*; are inſtantly and eternally ſet free from all theſe Sorrows of a ſinful and calamitous World. They ſhall no more meet with any croſs Events; they ſhall no more be diſappointed; they ſhall no more be afflicted and grieved: For being in the State of the Dead, they are in that State, concerning which

which we read, *Rev.* xxi. 4. 'And GOD ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more Pain: for the former Things are paſſed away.'

But beſides theſe Afflictions *common* to all Men, there are Labours and Diſtreſſes *peculiar to good Chriſtians*, in reſpect whereof, thoſe who are *in* CHRIST JESUS often ſuffer great Uneaſineſs, and go mourning all the Day long; all which they ſhall reſt from at Death.

It is no unuſual Thing, even for very good Chriſtians to call in Queſtion the Safety of their ſpiritual State; yea, many Times, they who 'fear the LORD, and obey the Voice of his Servant, walk in Darkneſs, and ſee no Light'; by Means whereof, they are 'ſubject to Bondage through Fear of Death,' and what may be the Conſequences of it beyond the Grave. But they are bleſſed, in that they ſhall reſt from theſe Conflicts and ſpiritual Labours, if not before, yet certainly at Death. For they ſhall then know, to their intire Satisfaction, by being received to the Place aſſigned for the *Spirits of juſt Men make perfect*, that they are indeed the Friends of GOD, intereſted in the Purchaſes of the REDEEMER's Blood, and Heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. They ſhall now ſee that all their former Suſpicions, which gave them ſo much Anxiety, were groundleſs; and ſhall never more entertain the leaſt Fear whether GOD is their FATHER, and CHRIST their SAVIOUR; but ſhall live in the aſſured Expectation of compleat Bleſſedneſs, when the 'LORD JESUS ſhall appear a ſecond Time without Sin unto Salvation.'

O what a glorious Reſt is this! What Heart can conceive the Pleaſure, with which the ſeparate Spirits of good Men ſhall be filled, when they come to know, beyond the Poſſibility of Miſtake, that they are in Favour with the GOD of Heaven, and that they ſhall, in the Day of the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST, be owned as his Diſciples, and bid, as ſuch, to enter upon Poſſeſſion of an everlaſting Kingdom in Heaven! — They will now exult with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory. ——

But the greateſt Trouble of good Men ariſes from the Burden of Sin, they at preſent groan under. Notwithſtanding all that has been wrought in them, and done for them, by the SPIRIT of GOD and *Holineſs*, they have ſtill a *carnal Part*, which oppoſes that in them which is *holy* and *ſpiritual*. And it occaſions a great deal of Labour and Conflict. 'The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh': And ſo great is the Struggle between theſe two Principles, that they have often Reaſon to cry out with the holy Apoſtle *Paul*, 'O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this Death'? But it ſhall not be always thus with thoſe who are *in* CHRIST JESUS. Now they may complain of 'Sin that dwelleth in them': And after all their Endeavours, they will have Reaſon to lament their Frailties and Imperfections, their too frequent Inadvertencies, if not more heinous Offences. But Death will forever ſet them at Reſt from all their Labours and Sorrows, occaſioned by Sin. No ſooner ſhall their Souls leave their Bodies than they ſhall become ſinleſs. They ſhall no more, after Death, have Reaſon to lament, that 'the good they would, they do not; and the Evil they would not, that they do.' They ſhall no more have Occaſion to bewail their having diſpleaſed GOD, or diſhonoured CHRIST, or grieved the good SPIRIT

of Grace. They ſhall no more reflect Blame on themſelves for any Thing they have done that is amiſs: For they are now in the Paradiſe of GOD without Spot or Wrinkle, perfectly conformed to the REDEEMER's Image.

O what a bleſſed Ingredient is this in the Reſt of thoſe *Dead who die in the LORD!* How ſhould the believing Proſpect of ſuch a Reſt from Sin, even at preſent, raviſh their Hearts with Joy! and diſpoſe them to long for their Diſſolution, that they might no more diſpleaſe their heavenly FATHER, that they might no more offend their compaſſionate REDEEMER! Thanks be to GOD for JESUS CHRIST, through whom we have the Hope of putting off that Body of Sin and Death we are now cloathed with, when we ſhall ſtand faultleſs before the Throne of his Glory with exceeding Joy.

And thus we ſee that *the Dead who die in the LORD are bleſſed*, as they *reſt from their Labours*, i. e. their Troubles, Conflicts and Tryals, whether of an *outward* or *ſpiritual* Nature. But this Reſt, you obſerve, is a *negative* Bleſſing: which though neceſſary to Happineſs, yet is not all that is neceſſary: Nay, it is the ſmalleſt Ingredient in the Bleſſedneſs of the *Dead in* CHRIST. They not only reſt from their Labours,

2. But, Secondly, *Their Works do follow them*: Not that they do ſo, according to the Strictneſs of the Letter; for being *tranſient Acts*, no ſooner done than gone, this is plainly impoſſible: But, by an eaſy Figure of Speech, *they* may be ſaid to *follow*, or, as the Words may be rendered, *go along with them*. They do ſo in ſuch Senſes as theſe, which the Time will allow me but juſt to mention.

Their

Their Works do follow them. i. e. The *conſcious Remembrance* that they once performed them. They do not, at Death, loſe their *Power of Reflection*, but carry it with them into the Place of ſeparate Spirits; where they are able to look back upon thoſe Labours of Love, and Works of Faith, Humility, Patience, Submiſſion, and other Virtues, they were enabled to exerciſe, while in this World of Tryal. And this Power of making themſelves conſcious to the having done theſe good Works, will be a never-failing Spring of Joy to them. Scarce any Thing will afford good Men, either in their ſeparate State, or after the Re-union of their Souls to their Bodies, greater Pleaſure than that which will reſult from the Reflection on thoſe virtuous Acts, in their various Kinds, which they were diſpoſed and enabled, by Divine Grace, to perform, in this World, to the Glory of CHRIST, and the Credit of his Religion.

Their Works do follow them. i. e. The *good Diſpoſitions* which were confirmed and improved by the frequent Performance of them. The Habits of Virtue are capable of Improvement by virtuous Acts. The Repetition of *theſe* has a natural Aptitude, and, under the Influence of the SPIRIT of GOD, a powerful Tendency, both to invigorate their correſponding Diſpoſitions, and give them a Facility in their Exertions. And good Men have accordingly improved their virtuous Habits, in a leſs or greater Degree, in Proportion to the Acts of Virtue, or thoſe good Works, they have performed, in Obedience to the Will of GOD. And theſe Diſpoſitions, with all their Improvements, they carry with them into the other World: And they are another Source of the Happineſs they will there enjoy. At preſent, they reap no ſuch Satisfaction as that which is the Fruit of their virtuous Diſpoſitions ſutably exerciſed: And the Connection between

tween Happineſs and virtuous Exerciſes will much more take place, in the future State. The *Dead in* CHRIST will never ceaſe, either in their unimbodied State, or afterwards, employing themſelves in Acts of Homage 'to him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb,' or in Works of Love and Service to thoſe they will then be aſſociated with: And in theſe and ſuch like Exerciſes, they will be eternally happy. ——

Their Works do follow them. i. e, in fine, the *Reward* of them, freely beſtowed for the Sake of JESUS CHRIST. Agreeable to which Interpretation of the Words is that of the Prophet, *Iſai.* iii. 10. 'Say ye to the Righteous, it ſhall go well with him; for they ſhall eat of the *Fruit* of their Doings.' And that of holy *David*, *Pſalm* lviii. 11.— 'Verily, there is a *Reward* for the Righteous.'

This Reward they will enter upon, in *part*, at Death, and enjoy through the whole Time of the *intermediate* State. But it will not be *compleat*, till the Day of the great and laſt Judgment. Then ſhall their *Souls* be again united to their *Bodies*, not as they were put into the Grave, but 'as faſhioned like to the glorious Body of JESUS CHRIST': Then ſhall they be acquitted, upon a full Hearing of their Caſe, before the General Aſſembly of Angels and Men: And then ſhall they be pronounced *bleſſed*, and have 'Entrance miniſtred to them abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom prepared for them, from before the Foundation of the World'; in which Kingdom, they ſhall have placed on their Heads 'an immortal incorruptible Crown of Glory', and be treated as 'Kings and Prieſts to GOD and the FATHER for ever and ever.' — But the Bleſſedneſs of this *Reward* cannot be deſcribed. It ſurpaſſes all Language; yea, all Conception. We have

have not, at preſent, fit Organs to let into the Mind adequate Ideas of it. For, 'as it is written, Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered in the Heart of Man, the Things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him.' 1 *Cor.* ii. 9.'

I ſhall only add, as the *Dead who die in the LORD* are *bleſſed*, in that *their Works do follow them*, it is obvious to remark, that their Bleſſedneſs will be *various*, in *Degree*, both in their *ſeparate State*, and after they are received to *Heaven*, according to the *Variety* there has been in *their Works*. Not that there is any *Merit* in the *Works*, even of thoſe who are *in* CHRIST. Such a Suppoſition would carry with it a groſs Abſurdity, and baſely reflect upon the *Mercy* of GOD, and the *Mediation* of JESUS CHRIST. But though there is no *Merit* in the *beſt Works* of the Saints, and the Reward promiſed to them is wholly a Matter of *Grace*, communicable only thro' the Hands of a *Mediator*, and on Account of his Performances and Sufferings, in this Capacity; yet, it ſeems a Thing congruous in it ſelf, that it ſhould be a Reward *proportioned* to the *Difference* there is in the *Works* of good Chriſtians. As *more* and *better* Works are done by ſome than others, it ſhould ſeem fit that the Reward of ſome ſhould be *greater* than that of others; that GOD ſhould diſtinguiſh thoſe, whom he has enabled, by his Grace, to diſtinguiſh themſelves, by their Zeal for his Honour, and their active Diligence in working the Works, which he ſent them into the World to do: And there is no Reaſon to think, but that he will *thus* beſtow the Rewards of the future World.

The *Application* is as follows.

1. As *the Dead who die in the LORD* are the Perſons pronounced *bleſſed*, in my Text, we ſhould all

all be *concerned* that we may *thus die*. Die we muſt, ſooner or later. 'It is appointed to all Men once to die.' And 'what Man is he that liveth, and ſhall not ſee Death'? — And ſhall we be unconcerned how it goes with us, when we come to die? That we may be ranked among the *bleſſed*, at the Day of our Death, is a Matter of the neareſt and greateſt Importance to us: And as thoſe *only*, among *the Dead who die in the LORD*, are *bleſſed*, it ſhould be our principal Concern and main Buſineſs, on the preſent Stage of Time, that we may thus die: In order whereto, we ſhould make it our earneſt and conſtant Care to get *into* CHRIST, while we live; for then, and then only, ſhall we be *in him* when we come to die.— There is ſuch a Thing as a *ſpiritual Union to* CHRIST, a being *in him*, ſo as the Reſt of the World are not; yea, ſo as to be intereſted in his Righteouſneſs and Merits, and the Mercy of GOD to eternal Life on that Account. An *Union to* CHRIST by external Profeſſion, and meer viſible Memberſhip, in that Kingdom of which he is the *Head*, is not ſufficient for this. We may, notwithſtanding ſuch a *being in* CHRIST, be ſevered from him at Death, as withered Branches fit for burning; and at the final Judgment be doomed to a Departure from him, unto the Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels. We muſt therefore take Care, that we be *in* CHRIST in an higher and more ſpiritual Senſe. It is by *Faith*, not an empty notional Faith, but a Faith that is an inward living powerful Principle of Action, that we become *one with* CHRIST, *dwell in him*, and *live to him*, to the Purpoſes of another World. Let us in this Way, get into CHRIST: And if we are thus *in him* while we *live*, we may depend we ſhall be *in him* when we come to die: And *bleſſed*, for ever bleſſed ſhall we be, if we *die in the LORD*.

2. The

2. The Conſideration, that thoſe *who die in the LORD, do reſt from their Labours*, affords ſtrong Ground of Support and Conſolation to *good Chriſtians* under the *Sorrows* and *Troubles of Life*. Theſe may be many, and great. — In this Way, it may ſeem good to the Wiſdom of GOD to give Opportunity for the Tryal of your Graces, and to let 'Patience have its perfect Work.' But be not diſcouraged: The Time of your Redemption draweth near. It will not be long before you will arrive at the Place of the *Dead in* CHRIST, where you ſhall eternally reſt from all your Labours and Sorrows. Your 'Tears may endure for a Night; but Joy cometh in the Morning.' The Time haſtens, it haſtens with a quick Pace, when all 'Cryings ſhall flee away.' O look forward, in the lively Exerciſe of Faith, to the Apartment aſſigned, in the Place of *ſeparate Spirits*, for the *Dead who die in the LORD*, and 'faint not in your Minds,' neither repine at Providence. — What though you may be called to endure Hardſhips, and paſs through a Variety of afflictive Tryals, ſo long as the Time is at Hand, when you ſhall be taken by the holy Angels of GOD, and carried to a World of eternal Reſt from all your Griefs and Labours. Is not this enough to ſupport your Spirits, and ſoften your Difficulties and Toils?— 'Be ye patient therefore,' ye who are *in* CHRIST, and *live to him*, 'ſtabliſh your Hearts; for the coming of the LORD draweth nigh': His coming to call you by *Death*; and then 'ſhall all Tears be wiped away from your Eyes: neither ſhall you know Sorrow any more.'

3. What has been diſcourſed may be improved to reconcile *good Chriſtians* to the *Thought of dying*, and render it *comfortable* to them. Your Bodies, it is true, will at Death, become ſenſeleſs and inactive; they will be laid in the dark and ſilent Grave, and there

there they will diſſolve, and gradually return to their original Duſt: which are Conſiderations abhorrent to Nature, and apt to ſtartle even the moſt *ſanctified in* JESUS CHRIST. But to guard againſt undue Impreſſions from theſe natural Horrors of the Grave, you ſhould, in the Exerciſe of Faith, turn your Thoughts to *thoſe Spirits within you*, which will ſurvive the Funeral of your *Bodies*; aſcending up, when they die, 'to GOD who gave them,' to be made by him *immediately bleſſed*, in ſome Place, he has prepared, in the other World, for the 'Spirits of juſt Men.' A moſt comforting Reflection this! and ſhould make the Thought of Death ſet eaſy on the Minds of good Men; yea, it ſhould render it pleaſant and joyful to them: Eſpecially, while they are in the further Exerciſe of Faith in a *living* REDEEMER, who will again 'ſtand upon this Earth,' and by his almighty Voice ſpeak Life even into their dead *Bodies*, however long they may have laid dead, and into whatever ſmall Particles of Duſt they may have been reſolved. For this is that which we are certified of in the *Revelations* of GOD, that 'this Corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal, Immortality; when ſhall be brought to paſs that Saying which is written, Death is ſwallowed up in Victory.'

4. *Rich Conſolation* may be fetched, from the preceeding Diſcourſe, for thoſe who may be mourning the Deceaſe of near and dear *Relatives*, whom they have Reaſon to believe *died in the LORD*. Such indeed, in a Senſe, cannot be ſaid to be *dead*: They are *alive* in reſpect of their *Spirits*; and what is more, their Spirits are alive in a *State of Happineſs*: for, as the Apoſtle *John* was ordered, by a *Voice from GOD out of Heaven*, to *declare*, and *write*, *Bleſſed are the Dead that die in the LORD*: To which, the *Divine* SPIRIT is brought in ſubjoining his

his Teſtimony; *Yea, ſaith the* SPIRIT, *that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.*

A moſt comforting and ſupporting Conſideration this! There is enough in it, duly realiſed, to compoſe your Minds to Silence and Submiſſion, upon the Death of the neareſt and deareſt Relative.

I doubt not, *your afflicted Paſtor*, and *my Companion and Fellow-Labourer in the Kingdom and Patience of* JESUS CHRIST, has often, ſince the holy GOD took from him *the Deſire of his Eyes*, quieted his Heart, by looking beyond the Grave, to the Paradiſe of GOD, and meditating on her, in his believing Hopes, as enjoying there perfect Reſt from all her Labours and Conflicts, and reaping the bleſſed Reward of her Works of Righteouſneſs, in *Joys unſpeakable*, which ſhall increaſe and endure forever. It cannot be ſuppoſed, that, in this View of her, he ſo much as wiſhes her back again into this World of Sin and Sorrow. And though he may *grieve*, it is not *for her*; but *for himſelf*, and *his dear Children*. And in this Reſpect, he is not to be blamed, if 'his Heart is troubled.' *Nature* leads to this, and *Religion* does not forbid it. *Abraham*, that Pattern of Faith and Submiſſion, upon the Death of *Sarah*, 'went to mourn and weep for her.' And a greater than *Abraham*, even the bleſſed JESUS, did himſelf *weep* upon Occaſion of the Death of *Lazarus*. And there is, in the preſent Caſe, juſt Cauſe of Grief:— The Excitements to the Senſations of Sorrow are ſtrong and powerful.

It may renew the Grief of *my Fellow-Worker unto the Kingdom of GOD*, if I mention, in his Preſence, thoſe Things which adorned his deceaſed Conſort, and made her amiable in the Sight of thoſe who

were acquainted with her: Yet, he will 'forgive me this Wrong,' if, out of Regard to GOD, whoſe ſhe was, and whom ſhe ſerved, I endeavour ſome brief Delineation of her Character.

She was a Perſon endowed with deſirable Qualities; a good Underſtanding, a ſolid Judgment, and a well-turned Mind: Sober and grave, yet pleaſant and chearful: cautious and reſerved, yet, upon ſutable Occaſions, wiſely free and open: meek and gentle, yet capable of Reſentment, when proper and neceſſary; though not haſty to be angry, not given to Wrath, never bitter, never revengeful, never clamorous and noiſy: Candid, and ever inclined to ſpeak well of others: Compaſſionate to the poor and afflicted, and not envying them who proſper in the World: Generous, yet frugal in her Expences: Humble in her Deportment, and adorning herſelf in modeſt Apparel: A Keeper at home, yet a Friend to all the good Offices of Neighbourhood and Acquaintance: Singularly *prudent*; not prone to be raſh in Conduct, not acting without Thought, and at Random; but apt to forecaſt her Affairs, and guide them with Diſcretion.—And as ſhe was formed to behave well in the ſeveral Relations of Life, few better filled them with the Duties proper to them. As a *Wife*, how engaging in her Carriage! how faithful! how dutiful! As a *Mother*, how tender and affectionate! how vigilant! 'having her Children in Subjection with all Gravity.' As *Miſtreſs* in the Family, how prudent in her Œconomy! how provident! how diligent! The *Wiſe Man*'s Deſcription of the *virtuous Woman* is very much her's, 'She openeth her Mouth with Wiſdom, and in her Tongue is the Law of Kindneſs. She looketh well to the Ways of her Houſhold, and eateth not the Bread of Idleneſs. Her Children

ariſe up, and call her bleſſed; her Huſband alſo, and he praiſeth her.' *Prov.* xxxi. 26, 27, 28.

But her greateſt Glory was her being a *Woman in* CHRIST, a real good Chriſtian; as we cannot but charitably believe and judge. Thoſe acquainted with her, when young, ſpeak of her as having then a ſerious Bent of Mind; noted for her Sobriety, Modeſty, and decent Chriſtian Behaviour. And ſhe, all along in Life, diſcovered an Abhorrence of Vice, in all its various Shapes and Kinds; and expreſſed a becoming Regard to the Things of GOD and Religion. She was a daily diligent Reader of her Bible, and conſtant in her Retirements for Devotion: A Lover of the Houſe, and public Worſhip of GOD; taking Care to ſanctify his *Day*, and devoutly attend on all his Inſtitutions.—But CHRIST, above all, was the lovely Object of her Deſire, and Faith, and Hope. Into his Hands ſhe committed the great Affair of her Soul's Salvation: On his Righteouſneſs and Merits ſhe depended for Acceptance with GOD to eternal Life: His Image ſhe was adorned with: And the Graces of his *Spirit* ſhe lived in the daily Exerciſe of; endeavouring in all Things to pleaſe and ſerve him.—

It was on Account of theſe, and ſuch like Strokes, in her Character, that ſhe lived ſo generally beloved, and died ſo generally lamented; leaving behind her a 'Name better than precious Ointment.' I doubt not I have a Witneſs, in the Hearts of many of you, to the Truth of all that I have ſaid concerning her. You, the Worſhippers of GOD in this Houſe, juſtly entertained an high Opinion of her: And I cannot but mention to your Honour, and the Imitation of the Churches, the *Reſpect* you ſo readily ſhewed to *her*, as well as *Sympathy* with your bereaved *Paſtor*, in the handſome Proviſion you made

made, by your generous Subſcription, for her decent Funeral.— But ſhe is now gone, not out of Being, bleſſed be GOD, though out of our World. In her laſt Sickneſs, ſhe was ſilent and ſubmiſſive; as, at other Times before, ſhe had ſet a bright Example of Patience and Firmneſs of Mind under great Afflictions. On her Death-bed, ſhe expreſſed her Deſire to depart and be with CHRIST; and her Hope, that for her to die, would be Gain. And we doubt not, ſhe is gone to be with CHRIST, (to whom ſhe lived) in the Place GOD has appointed for the Reception of unimbodied Spirits.

And what a Spring of Joy is this to the ſurviving Relatives! How thankful ſhould they be, that they are not called to 'mourn as thoſe who have no Hope'? And how ſhould they temper their Sorrow with the Thought, that their departed Friend, though 'abſent from the Body, is preſent with the LORD'!

We heartily wiſh for them all the Supports of Divine Grace, the Comforts of the HOLY GHOST, and thoſe Influences from above, under this 'Tryal of their Faith,' whereby they may be enabled to behave ſo as that CHRIST may be glorified, their own Holineſs promoted, and their future Crown of Glory made more bright and weighty.

We unite in our Supplications to the Throne of GOD particularly for the mourning *Huſband*, that he may be helped to exhibit ſuch a Temper and Conduct, upon this Occaſion, as that there may be no Reaſon to apply to him the Words of *Eliphaz* to *Job*, 'Behold, thou haſt inſtructed many, and thou haſt ſtrengthened the weak Hands. Thy Words have upholden him that was falling, and thou haſt ſtrengthened the feeble Knees. But now it is come upon thee,

thee, and thou fainteſt; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled': But, on the contrary, that it may be ſaid of him, he ſets before his Flock a bright Pattern of Meekneſs and Humility, of Faith, Patience, Submiſſion, and a ſteady Truſt in GOD, and firm Reliance on his Perfections and Promiſes. And may he be quickened to go on in his LORD's Work, with greater Zeal, Vigour, Fidelity, and active Diligence. And in fine, may he, from his own Experience of the Divine Conſolations, under this trying Providence, have Reaſon to exult with the holy Apoſtle *Paul*, and ſay, 'Bleſſed be GOD, even the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of Mercies, and the GOD of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we our ſelves are comforted of GOD.'

We wiſh alſo, for the bereaved *Children*, the Grace of GOD whereby they may be diſpoſed and enabled to be Followers of their departed *Mother*, wherein ſhe followed CHRIST. And may you her *Sons* appear as 'beautiful Plants grown up in your Youth': And you her *Daughters*, ſhine as 'Corner-Stones poliſhed after the Similitude of a Palace.'

Our Prayer likewiſe for the mourning *Siſters* is, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST would ſay to them, for their Support and Comfort, as he did in the Days of his Fleſh to the *Siſters* of dead *Lazarus*, 'I am the Reſurrection and the Life: He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live.'

And may it pleaſe a good and gracious GOD to ſanctify this repeated Stroke of his Hand upon *this Church* of JESUS CHRIST. We have Reaſon to lament, and pray, with *David*, 'Help LORD, for the

the Godly ceaſe, and the faithful fail from among us.'—Let us not be inſenſible of our great Loſs, in the Removal of ſo many of our *Brethren* and *Siſters in* CHRIST, by Death, from Time to Time, and eſpecially of late. 'O LORD our GOD, by whom ſhall *Jacob* ariſe? for he is ſmall'! — Let us make GOD our Hope; and direct our Prayer to his holy Dwelling-place, begging that he would mercifully look from thence, and be 'the Repairer of our Breaches': And inſtead of the *Parents*, may the *Children* riſe up, and do worthily for GOD in their Day and Generation.

And may we all get *ſpiritual Good* by the Providence we are now lamenting.

And may the *Daughters in Zion*, in ſpecial, hear the Voice of GOD, ſpeaking as it were particularly to them; and be quickened therefrom to live as thoſe who muſt ſhortly die. Let your 'Behaviour be as becometh Godlineſs'. — 'Be ſober, diſcreet, chaſte, exemplary for all good Works.' And 'your Adorning, let it be the hidden Man of the Heart; even the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit: which is, in the Sight of GOD, of great Price.'

5. In the laſt Place, As the *Works* of good Chriſtians *do follow them* into the other World, let us all labour to *abound therein*. Our *good Deeds*, done in Faith and Love, from a Regard to CHRIST, and for the Glory of GOD, are the only Things we can carry with us into the coming State: And theſe, we may depend, will go along with us, and of the infinite *Mercy* of GOD, through the infinite *Worthineſs* of his dear Son JESUS CHRIST, be rewarded beyond, not only our Deſerts, but even our Imaginations. And the *more* and *better* our Works have

have been, the greater and more glorious will our Reward be.

Be encouraged therefore to do all the good you can in the World. Serve GOD, and your Generation, with all your Might. — Faithfully employ your Time, and wiſely improve the Talents you have been intruſted with. — 'And beſides this, giving all Diligence, add to your Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godlineſs? and to Godlineſs, Brotherly-kindneſs; and to Brotherly-kindneſs, Charity.' And look to it, that 'theſe Things be in you and abound': For in Proportion to your *Improvements* in them *here*, will be your *Reward* in Heaven *hereafter*. 'Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, Be ye ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the LORD; for as much as ye know, that your Labour ſhall not be in vain in the LORD.'

FINIS.

7 AP 64